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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001532

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SUBJECT: Maoist Students Bomb Kathmandu School, Injuring Six

REFS: A) Kathmandu 1315, B) Kathmandu 481

1. (SBU) Summary. Students shouting Maoist slogans set off a bomb at a private business college in Kathmandu August 8, injuring six. The school occupies a building owned by the King's Press Secretary, who lives next door and was not harmed. The motive for the attack is unclear as no large-scale Maoist strikes or actions have been announced for the coming days. End Summary.

Bomb at Business College Injures Six

2. (U) A bomb exploded at a private school in the Maitidevi area of central Kathmandu early on August 8, police sources confirmed. Six people were injured, including three passers-by, and one victim remains in critical condition. Between 6:45 and 7:00 a.m., a group of six youths chanting Maoist slogans entered the "College of Applied Business," told everyone to leave, and set off a bomb outside the door to the principal's office. [Note: No/no American students are enrolled at the school, which is located about five kilometers southeast of the Embassy. No/no Embassy residences are located nearby. End Note.]

Similar to Last Blast

3. (SBU) Witnesses told Embassy staff that the explosion was similar in effect to a July 5 blast at Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's party office (Ref A). After an investigation that tied the July 5 explosion to Maoist insurgents, police reportedly arrested one man and confiscated explosive materials from his residence.

Students Object to Fees, Sanskrit

4. (SBU) Another school in Kathmandu's Maitidevi neighborhood was attacked March 1, when gangs of students raided two different schools in the capital, dousing equipment with kerosene and setting fires. These attacks were intended to terrorize the public into following a "school strike" they had called for March 4-5 (Ref B). In recent years, Maoist-affiliated student groups have attacked and vandalized schools throughout the country. In addition, they have issued calls protesting "fees" charged to public school students and demanding reductions in tuition. The Maoists also have also made known their opposition to the teaching of Sanskrit, which they identify with reactionary Hinduism.

Building Owned by Palace Official

5. (SBU) The building bombed on August 8 is owned by the Press Secretary at Nepal's Royal Palace, Mohan Bahadur Pandey, who leases it to the school. Pandey's own residence is adjacent to the affected building. He was reportedly at home at the time of the blast, but was unharmed. In conversations with us, both journalists and police officers voiced speculation that the Maoists intentionally attacked property owned by a palace official to make a "symbolic" gesture.

Comment

6. (SBU) Initial reports suggest that the August 8 explosion was the work of the same people who bombed the PM's party office July 5. It also fits a pattern of agitation by student groups either affiliated with or sympathetic to the Maoist insurgents. However, unlike the March 1 incidents, which were meant to enforce a school strike, the August 8 attack does not seem connected to any impending Maoist action. A general strike called for September 16 is still more than five weeks away. Given the pattern of previous attacks against schools in the neighborhood, Post judges that the palace official's

ownership of the property was merely coincidental.

BOGGS